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CASTRATION OF YOUNG PIGS

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Contribution from the Bureau of Animal Industry
A. D. MELVIN, Chief

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CASTRATION OF YOUNG PIGS.

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This publication deals with castration, or the removal of the essential organs of male pigs. The objects of castration are to prevent reproduction, to increase fattening propensity, to better the quality of the meat of the animal, and to help insure docility. Every farmer should be competent to castrate pigs, as the losses from the operation are as a rule not very heavy and could be reduced by exercising care and attention.

AGE AT WHICH TO CASTRATE.

Pigs should be castrated while they are young; the best time is between 6 and 8 weeks of age, before weaning. At this age there is less shock to the pig and possibly less check in growth. If it is still sucking its dam when castration takes place the chances are that it will be more thrifty and in better condition than when the operation is performed immediately after weaning. A pig 6, 7, or 8 weeks old is small enough to be handled conveniently and the testicles are large enough to render the operation quite simple.

PREPARATION.

Select a clear, dry day to perform the operation; it should never be done on a rainy day. When it is possible to do so, avoid castrating during "fly time" or in extremely cold weather.

All the pigs that are to be castrated should be put into a pen just large enough to hold them, so as to facilitate catching and lessen the excitement among the animals. Another pen should be prepared to received the castrated ones. If they are to be kept in a house pen it should be clean, dry, and free from dust, and a small quantity of clean, dry straw should be scattered in it. If a pasture lot is to be used, select one that is free from mudholes and wallows and contains some grass.

A good castrating knife or a penknife that will keep a sharp edge is necessary to do a clean job. A castrating knife of this kind can be purchased for from $1.25 to $2. A roll of absorbent cotton and a vessel containing a 3 per cent solution of compound cresol (U. S. P.), carbolic acid, or other reliable disinfectant should be at hand.

METHOD OF OPERATING.

Two persons can work to the best advantage in castrating. The attendant goes into the pen and picks up a pig by the hind leg, taking the right hind and front leg in his right hand and the left

FIG. 1.—Method of holding pig for castration.

FIG. 2.—Cleansing the scrotum.

hind and front leg in his left. In this manner the pig may be held in the lap of the attendant. If the attendant holds the pig in a position like that shown in figure 1 there is less liability of its wriggling about and making it hard for the operator to work. When the pig is in the desired position, the scrotum should first be washed with a piece of cotton saturated with the antiseptic solution (fig. 2), and before making the cut the operator should be sure that the knife and his hands are thoroughly clean. The knife should be dipped in the antiseptic solution before making the cut.

One of the testicles is seized between the thumb and forefinger of the left hand and an incision made over the most prominent part, parallel with the middle line of the scrotum and a half inch to the

side of it. (Fig. 3.) The incision should be deep enough to liberate the testicle at one pass, and should also be long enough to free the testicle and to insure good drainage; to do this it must go through the scrotum and also through the sack that incloses the testicle. (Fig. 4.) The membranous sac is allowed to go back and should be cut loose at the inner part of the testicle so that the cords may be pulled out and scraped, not cut, off. The scraping is done by holding the knife in a slanting position and scraping back and forth until the cord is severed. (Fig. 5.) The cord should never be cut off abruptly, for to do so may cause a greater hemorrhage. Jerking out

FIG. 3.—Making the incision.

FIG. 4.—The testicle removed from the sac by one incision.

the cord is also dangerous, as it may cause a rupture. The other testicle is liberated in the same manner. (Fig. 6.) It is not necessary to sew up the wound, as it will heal more readily without interference.

In hot weather it is advisable to rub some pine tar on the scrotum to keep flies and other insects from the wound. Accidents following castrations of pigs are rare, though abscesses are sometimes formed. These are manifested by much swelling and soreness at the seat of operation. Treatment consists in opening the abscess with a thoroughly clean knife and fingers, and washing it out twice daily with an antiseptic fluid.

PIGS RUPTURED IN THE SCROTUM.

There are on some farms from year to year numerous cases of pigs ruptured in the scrotum, while on other farms this condition is scarcely known. Some farmers castrate these pigs as readily as they castrate their ordinary boar pigs, but a great many others find the operation difficult or are unable to perform it.

FIG. 5.—Scraping the cord.

FIG. 6.—Incision after testicles have been removed.

The value of a pig in this condition is so slight that unless there is a considerable number of these ruptured pigs raised on the farm it will hardly pay the average farmer to employ a veterinarian to perform the operation.

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